

Remarks

Reconsideration and allowance of the subject application are respectfully solicited.

Claims 1-4 and 6-10 are now pending in the application, with Claim 1 being independent. Claims 5 and 11 have been cancelled without prejudice. Claims 1, 2, 4 and 6-10 have been amended herein.

Claims 1-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. 3-271754 (Morita et al.). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As is recited in independent Claim 1, the present invention relates to an image forming apparatus that includes an image forming unit, an intermediate transfer member, recording material conveying means, transfer means, a first openable portion, a second openable portion, and a guide member. The image forming unit has an image bearing member and is capable of being detachably attached to a main body of the image forming apparatus. The intermediate transfer member is disposed at an upper position relative to the image forming unit, and the image on the image bearing member is transferred to the intermediate transfer member. The recording material conveying means conveys a recording material along a conveyance route. The transfer means transfers the image on the intermediate transfer member onto the recording material conveyed by the recording material conveying means. The first openable portion is disposed on an upper face of the main body, is openable with respect to the main body, and holds the intermediate transfer member. The second openable portion which is disposed on a side

surface of the main body and is openable to expose the conveyance route. The guide member supports attachment and detachment of the image forming unit to and from the main body of the image forming apparatus. The image forming unit is capable of being attached and detached by the guide member through an opening which is formed when the second openable portion is closed and the first openable portion is opened.

With the above arrangement, an image forming unit can be attached and detached from the main body of an image forming apparatus through an opening which is formed when a second openable portion, disposed on a side surface of the main body, is closed and a first openable portion, disposed on an upper face of the main body, is opened. Therefore, the second openable portion on the side surface cannot interfere with a handling operation of the image forming unit when it is attached to or removed from the main body.

Morita et al. relates to a color image forming apparatus in which various maintenance operations can be carried out from one side of the device. A photosensitive belt 1 and various developing units are integrated in a cartridge 30 that further incorporates an electrifier 6, a cleaner 13, a paper feeding path 15 and a pair of timing rollers 17. The cartridge and its various components are attached to and detached from the device main body by a cartridge inserting guide provided on an upper housing that swings open upwardly about a pivot 160.

However, the image forming unit that has an image bearing member in Morita et al. is integrated in the cartridge 30 that is attachable to the upper housing. Morita et al. does not disclose or suggest at least a guide member for supporting attachment and detachment of an image forming unit, having an image bearing member, to and from a

main body of an image forming apparatus, with the image forming unit being capable of being attached and detached by the guide member through an opening which is formed when a second openable portion is closed and a first openable portion, disposed on an upper face of the main body, is opened, as is recited in independent Claim 1.

Thus, Morita et al. fails to disclose or suggest important features of the present invention recited in independent Claim 1.

Other citations have also been reviewed, but are not believed to be any more relevant than those discussed above. For example, Japanese Patent Publication No. 3-84837 (which is listed on the accompanying Form PTO-1449) is directed to a recording apparatus having openable portions disposed respectively on upper and side faces, with an intermediate transfer unit also attached to the openable portion on the upper face. However, as understood by Applicant, the image forming unit in this apparatus is designed to be removed by sliding from its front side. This clearly differs from the present invention in which the image forming unit is capable of being attached and detached through an opening which is formed when the second openable portion is closed and the first openable portion is opened.

Thus, independent Claim 1 is patentable over the citations of record. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the § 102 rejection are respectfully requested.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that the present invention is patentably defined by independent Claim 1. Dependent Claims 2-4 and 6-10 are also allowable, in their own right, for defining features of the present invention in


addition to those recited in independent Claim 1. Individual consideration of the dependent claims is requested.

This Amendment After Final Rejection is an earnest attempt to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, and is believed to clearly place this application in condition for allowance. This Amendment was not earlier presented because Applicant earnestly believed that the prior Amendment placed the subject application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of this Amendment under 37 CFR 1.116 is respectfully requested.

Applicant submits that the present application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejection set forth in the above-noted Office Action, and an early Notice of Allowability are requested.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark A. Williamson", written over a horizontal line.

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